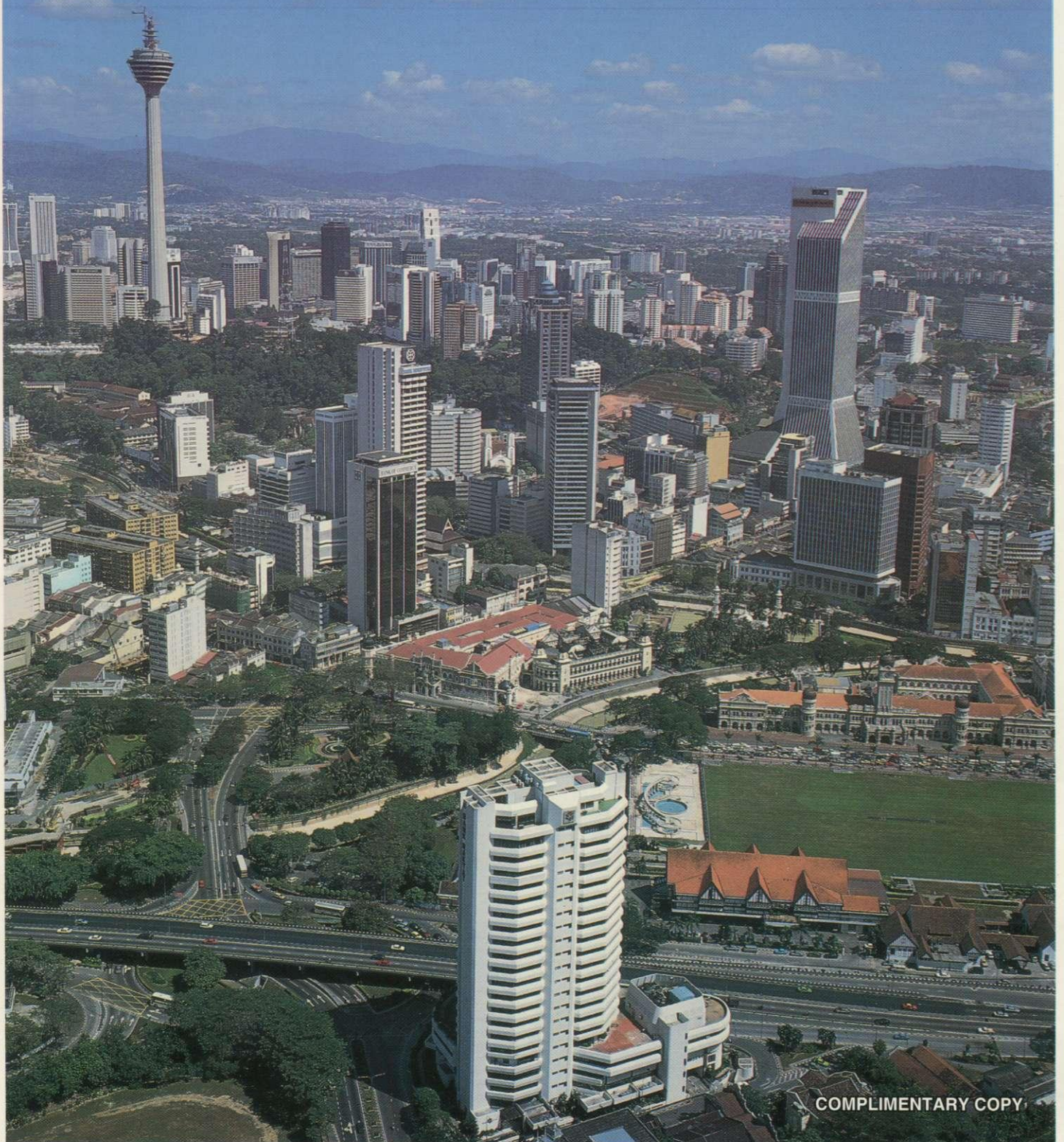


JULY • AUGUST 1995

MALAYSIA

t o u r i s m



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ISSN 0128-1348

A BIMONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE MALAYSIA TOURISM PROMOTION BOARD (TOURISM MALAYSIA)

Space

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The Malaysian tourism industry has made enormous strides in recent years. In less than a decade, we have become one of the leading tourist destinations in Asia. Much of this increase has been due to the promotional efforts of the Government. The Visit Malaysia Year 1990 and 1994 campaigns, for instance, were instrumental in boosting tourist arrivals and revenue from tourism. An important factor in this success has been the ability of the private sector to complement the public sector's efforts in these programmes.



The future growth of the tourism industry is similarly going to rely on the ability of the private sector to anticipate major events in the country's economic growth. High on the list is the Commonwealth Games in 1998. The largest games event outside the Olympics, the Commonwealth Games is expected to attract thousands of participants and spectators to the country. In addition, worldwide television coverage of the country is expected to bring Malaysia to millions of living rooms throughout the world. It is an opportunity without rival.

The private sector has to be proactive to make the most of this prestigious event. Investment in new facilities is only part of the picture. Industry operators should also be prepared to upgrade their skills and the quality of the services that the industry currently offers. With these measures, there is no reason why the country should not be able to match, or even exceed the achievements of the last 10 years. The public sector is already geared towards the Commonwealth Games. It's up to the rest of the industry to their part.

ZAINUDDIN MOHD. ZAIN

Director-General

Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board (Tourism Malaysia)

JULY/AUGUST '95 IN MALAYSIA

NATIONAL PARK JULY FEST

(Taman Negara, Pahang)

A month-long treat for nature lovers as they get to know more about the world's oldest jungle and its inhabitants which includes some of the rarest species of plants and animals in the world. Exhibitions of the culture and art of the Orang Asli people are also featured.

1 - 31 July



FLORA FEST

(Kuala Lumpur)

Malaysia's own Flora Fest was first held in 1991. The culminating event of the festival is the Floral Parade, participated by the various states, government and non-government organisations. Various shows, exhibitions and competitions are held around Kuala Lumpur.

2 - 9 July



DURIAN FESTIVAL

(Tapah, Perak)

Held during the annual durian season, visitors get to sample the many varieties of the fruit, referred to as Malaysia's 'King of Fruits'. There are competitions such as selecting the best durian. A variety of local fruits are also offered for sale.

11 - 20 August

LUMUT FESTIVAL

(Lumut, Perak)

An annual festival held at Teluk Batik, a stretch of beach about 6km from Lumut. Highlights include sea sports, cultural shows and fun fairs.

13 - 31 August

JOHOR CARNIVAL

(Johor)

The annual Johor Carnival showcases the sociocultural heritage of Malaysia's southern state. Among the scheduled events are a kuda kepang competition, ghazal and gamelan festival, handicraft exhibition and a tourism expo. Also featured are cultural performances, a jet-ski competition and a golf tournament.

19 - 31 August



CAMERON HIGHLANDS FLOWER FEST

(Cameron Highlands, Pahang)

This highland retreat bursts into bloom with exhibitions, demonstrations and parades featuring the colourful floral and agricultural produce of the highlands.

20 - 24 August



NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATIONS

(Throughout Malaysia)

This is the 38th anniversary of the country's independence, and is celebrated by the nation with much pomp and pageantry. Parades displaying the patriotic spirit of Malaysians are the order of the day, and cultural performances and sporting events add to the festive ambience.

31 August





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Skyline of Kuala Lumpur, host city
of the 1998 Commonwealth Games.
Picture by **PETER MARTIN**

MALAYSIA

tourism

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Tourism Malaysia Diary

July 2-14	Sales Mission to South Africa (Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg)
July 27-30	Thailand International Travel Show, Bangkok (Thailand)
July 30-Aug 5	Sales Mission to Indonesia (Jakarta, Surabaya)
Aug 28-Sept 8	Malaysian Food & Cultural Promotion, Saigon (Vietnam)

HOLIDAYS & HOSPITABLE HAVENS

By Cheah Boon Teck

Despite the fact that 38 new hotels were set up in 1994, the country's hotel industry performed creditably, chalking up a higher average occupancy rate of 65.3%.

Among the main movers and beneficiaries of the tourism industry is the hotel trade. Hotels are the main catalyst of development of the tourism industry in many areas. At the same time, hotels are an accurate barometer of the industry's health, their occupancy rates reflecting the flow of visitors to a particular area.

The absence of quality accommodation often serves to dampen tourism development. A case in point is Port Dickson (PD). Though one the country's oldest beach resorts, for decades PD was only thought of as worthy of day trip family outings. The construction of a number of international class hotels in PD, however, has changed its status almost overnight.

For the first time, overnight visitors have become an economic force to contend with. Many companies are now willing to consider PD in their annual vacation

and convention programmes. The quality of support services available in PD's once sleepy town has also improved in tandem with this development. Seafood restaurants and other nightlife, for instance, have begun to spring up along the beachfront.

Recent data indicates that the hotels in Port Dickson are not the only ones to have cause for cheer. In 1994, the average hotel occupancy rate in the country was 65.3%, a 3.9% increase over 1993. This creditable achievement was made despite the fact that over 38 new hotels were set up during the year, adding 4,902 additional rooms to the previously existing count of 61,005, an increase of 8%. This situation is no doubt attributable to the success of the Visit Malaysia Year 1994 campaign, which saw tourist arrivals increase to an all-time high of 7.19 million.

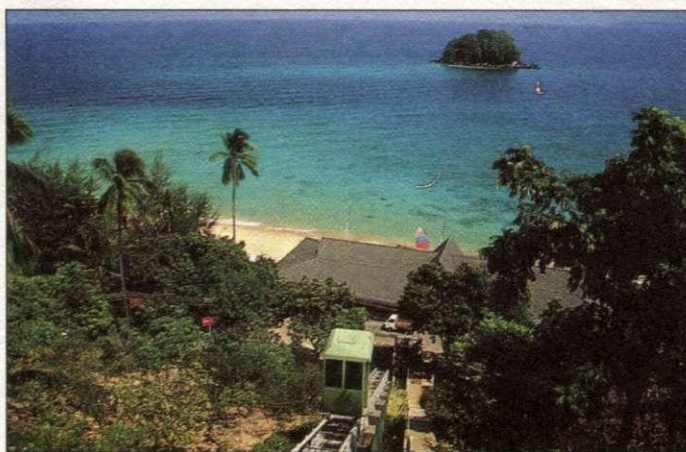
Hotels in Kuala Lumpur recorded the highest occupancy rate at 76.7%. This represents a 16.6% increase

over the 1993 figure of 60.1%. The highest increase (12.2%) was recorded by the bigger hotels (those with 300 rooms and above), while hotels in the 20-49 room category and 10-19 rooms posted increases of 2.5% and 6.2% respectively. Hotels in other major metropolitan areas also reported encouraging occupancy rates, with Penang beach hotels posting 64.7%, Penang city hotels, 62.3%, Melaka, 62.9% and Johor Bahru, 58.1%.

Among the other major towns along the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia, Subang emerged on top with 84.1%, Petaling Jaya, 83.3% and Seremban, 63.8%. All three have never been considered major points of convergence for the hotel trade. However, these figures underscore their growing prominence, be it in tourism or business.

Among the east coast towns, average occupancy was lower at 51.5%. Compared with previous years, however, many recorded increases in their occupancy rates. Kuala Terengganu hoteliers, for instance, catered for an additional 3.6% in the number of occupants, Dungun, 5.5% and Kuantan, 0.2%.

Among the major resort areas, hill resorts averaged 56.1%, with a high 87% for Genting Highlands and a low of 48.7% for



The island resort of Tioman

AVERAGE HOTEL OCCUPANCY RATE IN MALAYSIA (SELECTED CITIES)

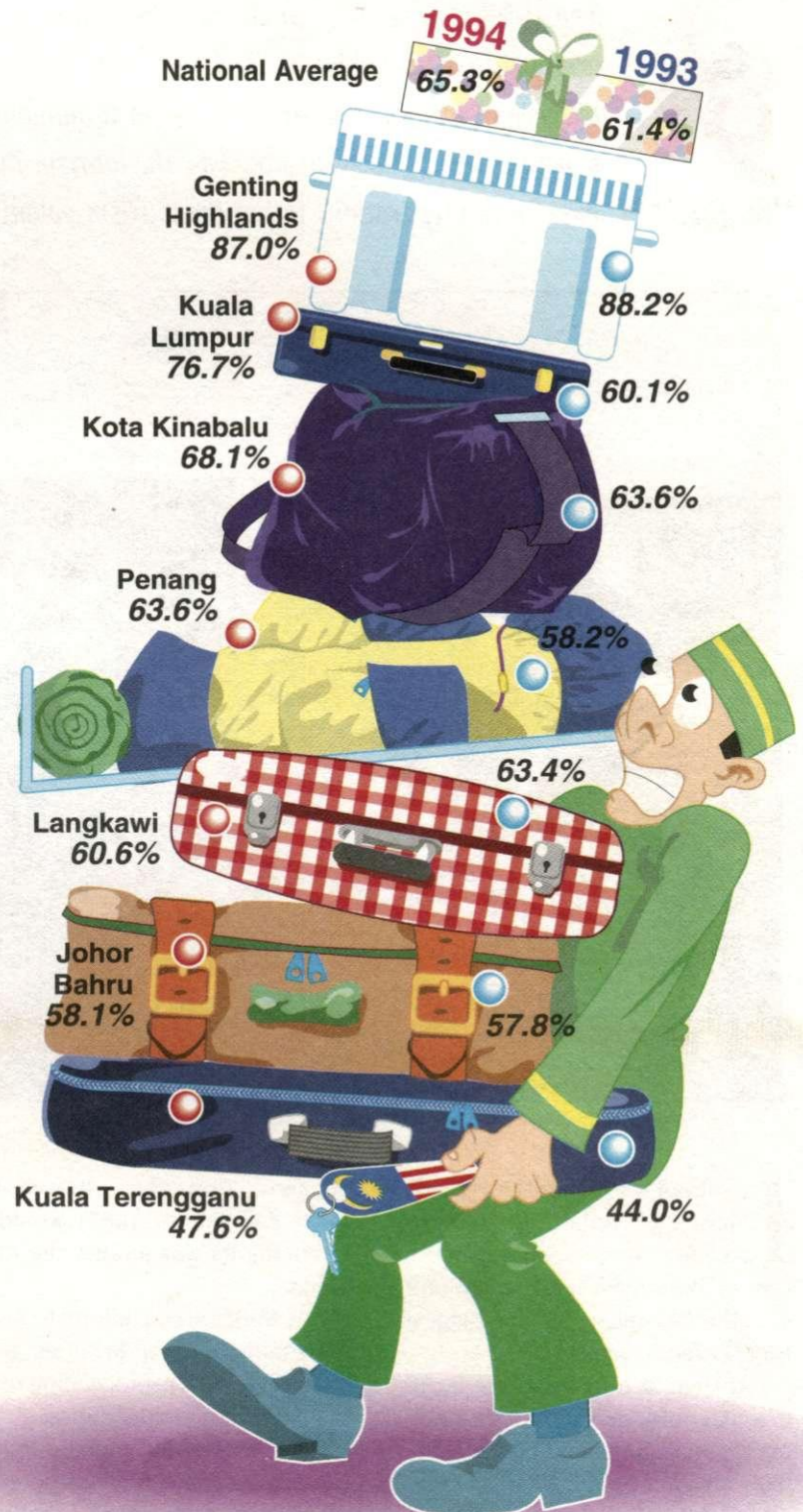
Cameron Highlands. Occupancy rates in Cameron Highlands actually increased over the previous year's level of 44.8%.

Island resorts claimed occupancy of 54.0%, led by Langkawi (60.6%), and followed by Tioman (56.3%) and Pangkor (45.2%). Overall, however, occupancy rates in all three islands had declined between 2.8% and 1.2% compared with 1993.

Over in Kota Kinabalu, hoteliers could revel in a 68.1% occupancy, while Kuching was running a close second at 59.9%. Labuan's hotel occupancy increased 2.7% to around 35.5%.

The figures indicate that there is a general upmarket shift in the demand for hotel accommodation. Larger hotels are usually better organised, with a wide array of services and facilities. Smaller hotels, on the other hand, are somewhat limited in this respect, having neither the capital base nor the economies of scale to invest in comprehensive recreational infrastructure.

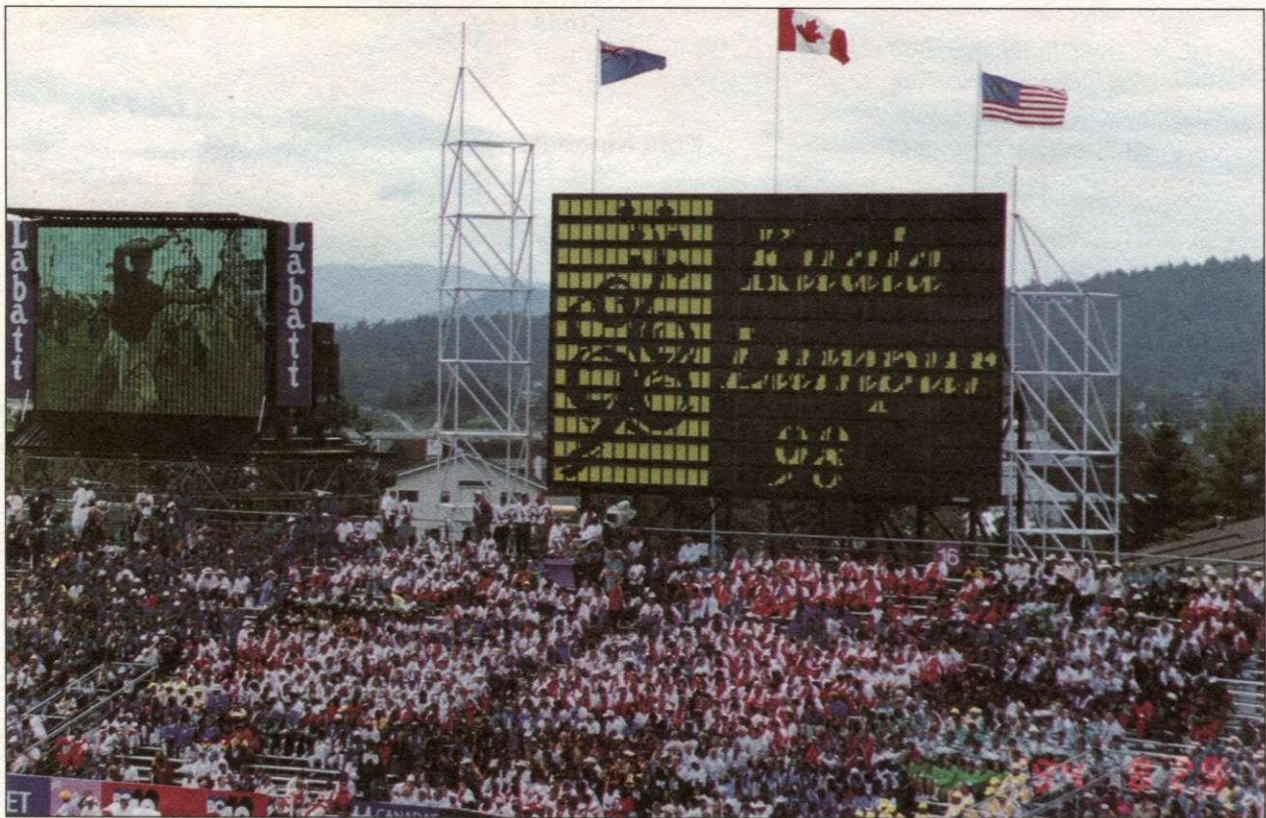
Tourists, both domestic and foreign, have come to appreciate quality service and have the disposable income to choose accommodation that meets their increasingly discerning requirements. In this respect, the writing is on the wall, and Malaysian hotels would have to continue to upgrade if they are to remain the catalysts of tourism growth.



GEARING UP FOR THE GAMES



The 1998 Commonwealth Games, the largest games event outside the Olympics, is expected to attract thousands of participants and spectators to Kuala Lumpur. Worldwide television coverage will bring Malaysia to millions throughout the world. Among the beneficiaries of this event would be the tourism industry. James Shyong finds out about plans and preparations to tap the tourism potential of this sports extravaganza.



The closing ceremony at the 1994 Commonwealth Games in Victoria, Canada

In about 36 months, Kuala Lumpur will roll out the red carpet for the Commonwealth Games, the largest sports event outside the Olympics, and the biggest ever hosted by Malaysia.

By then, a host of sports facilities like outdoor and indoor stadiums, gymnasiums and bigger spectator stands would have been completed.

The new international airport at Sepang would have been opened to handle many more millions of pas-

sengers. And the ultra-modern Light Rail Transit (LRT) would be humming its way around the Klang Valley.

As things stand, efforts to install such infrastructural facilities are in full swing. Work is proceeding round the clock to meet deadlines.

But what about preparations to capitalise on the tourism potential of an event such as the Commonwealth Games? While there are some efforts in this direction, a certain lethargy prevails, and

it appears that much has still to be done in terms of promotion by hoteliers and tour agents.

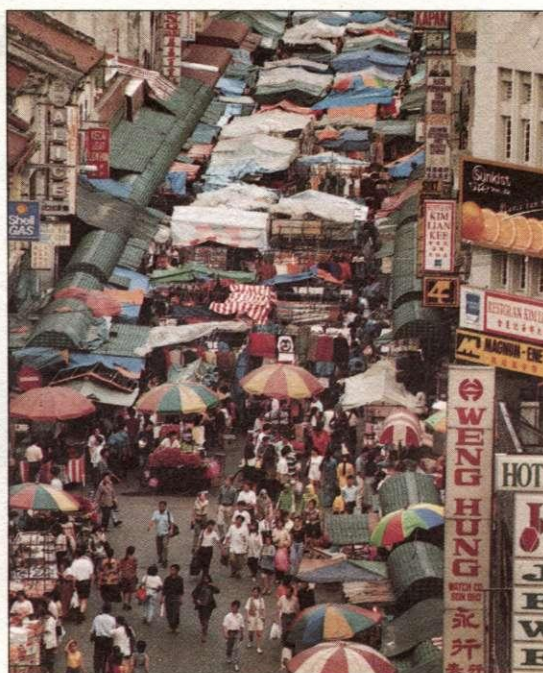
The general view tends to be that the Games are still a good three years away.

But some quarters have already taken steps to be part of the action in 1998. Such as M. K. Sen, Managing Director of property development-based Mid Valley City Sdn Bhd in Bangsar. He represents one of the few far-sighted entrepreneurs who are taking the initiative

to capitalise on business during the Games. Sen has set in motion a plan to build the biggest shopping mall in Kuala Lumpur encompassing three department stores, supermarkets and a hotel on a site that was previously squatter land.

"We hope to complete phase one of our project in 36 months, in time for the Commonwealth Games," he said. "We reckon our range of department stores and supermarkets would cater for a broad spectrum of the visitors during the Games."

Datuk Suleiman Manan, Chairman of Taiping Consolidated Berhad, is another of those dynamic businessmen contributing towards the Games. He is building the upscale Starhill shopping centre next to his current flagship, Lot 10 shopping centre, in the busy Bukit Bintang area. He is also getting the five-star Marriot Hotel ready in time for the Games. Likewise, Hong Leong Properties is building another five-star establishment, Guoman Kuala Lumpur, also timed for 1998.



Left: Sidewalk shopping in Kuala Lumpur's Chinatown.

Below: Deer Park, one of the city's attractions.

Bottom: Among the endless variety of local food is roti canai, a truly Malaysian bread.

The Culture, Arts and Tourism Ministry together with the Seri Malaysia hotel chain are also working to provide more budget-type accommodation during the Games. It is a fact that not all visitors to the Games would be well-heeled travellers. There would be a sizeable group at the other end of the spectrum, people who travel in groups on the cheap.

It has been estimated that there will be more than 20,000 rooms in Kuala Lumpur and Petaling Jaya by 1998 compared with the present



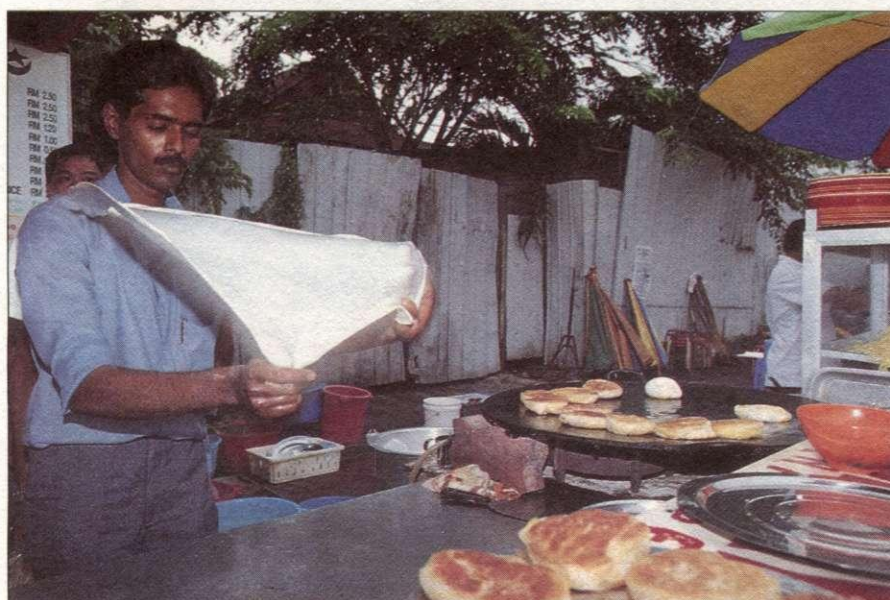
14,000 rooms.

As for shopping facilities in the city, there is no shortage of bargains at shopping complexes and large department stores in the city and Petaling Jaya, or from street pedlars in Petaling Street and night markets.

The endless variety of food offered by the profusion of eateries, from posh restaurants and sidewalk cafes to the ubiquitous hawker makes Kuala Lumpur a gourmet's paradise.

Added to this is the capital's central location; forests, beaches and hilltop resorts are all easily accessible.

Considering that there are entrepreneurs who have stirred into action, shouldn't those involved in the travel and tourist trade be thinking about the Games? What should



be done to tap the full potential of the Games?

Plenty, says Datuk Moehamat Izat Emir, President of the Federal Territory Malay Chambers of Commerce and Industry. The private sector, especially the travel trade, he says, should not allow the event to go to waste. After all, it is the biggest sports event to be staged by the country.

"This is our best chance to promote our country and bring in more tourist dollars," he added. "Sports is a multi-million dollar industry and Malaysians should recognise that."

His view is shared by Sieh Kok Chi, Secretary-General of the Olympic Council of Malaysia, the authority representing Malaysia's affiliation to the International

Olympic Committee.

The initial feedback from many Commonwealth countries is that they are eagerly awaiting the 1998 Games in Malaysia, given the well-known hospitality of Malaysians. This is especially so with countries from the developing world like Africa, Caribbean and the Pacific Islands.

According to Sieh, the Australians are likely to form the largest number of foreign visitors. He cites two reasons for this: first,

the proximity and second, Australia has always done well at the Commonwealth Games and this has always encouraged its countrymen to support their athletes during the Games.

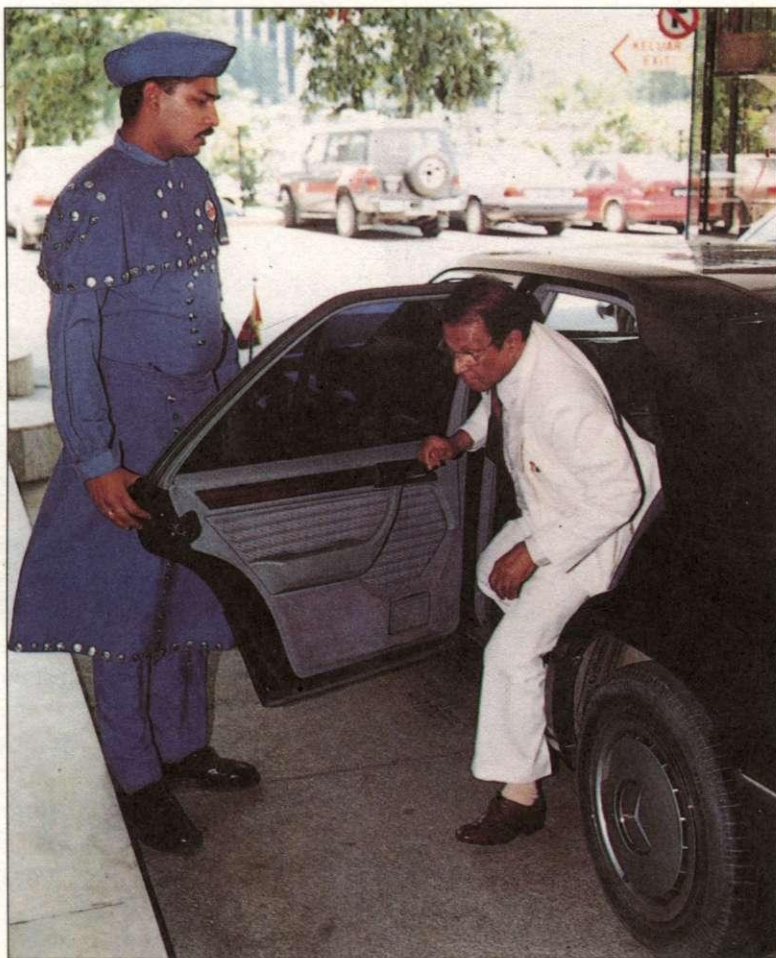
Besides the Australians, spectators from developed countries like New Zealand, Britain and Canada would also form sizeable numbers at the Games.

The strongest factor in attracting a big crowd to the Kuala Lumpur Commonwealth Games, according to Sieh, would be the relative low cost of living. A fact amplified by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad when he launched the anti-inflation campaign in June.

"Our lower cost should work in



Mt Kinabalu (above), South-East Asia's highest peak, is easily accessible from KL, while the seaside resort of Port Dickson (top) is a two-hour drive from the city



A facet of Malaysian hospitality

our favour and we should capitalise on that," said Izat, who is also a Director of Faber Group Berhad which is building the new Sheraton Kuala Lumpur Hotel to be opened in time for the Games.

Sieh, a keen sportsman and sports official since the late Sixties, says Malaysia should adopt a flexible attitude when it comes to hotel accommodation.

He cites as an example the case of hoteliers in Atlanta, host of the 1996 Olympic Games, who have insisted that each guest stay a minimum of 12 days in a hotel.

"We should be more flexible and tolerant," he said. "This will help boost our tourism industry."

Sports officials and spectators have always lamented on the usual hype of supposed shortage of hotel rooms or price hikes in the host cities. Such adverse publicity often has a detrimental effect on the over-

all attendance of the Games because they discourage people from going. Those who do go despite the odds are often surprised to find plenty of rooms available. And hoteliers often have to slash

prices so as not to lose business.

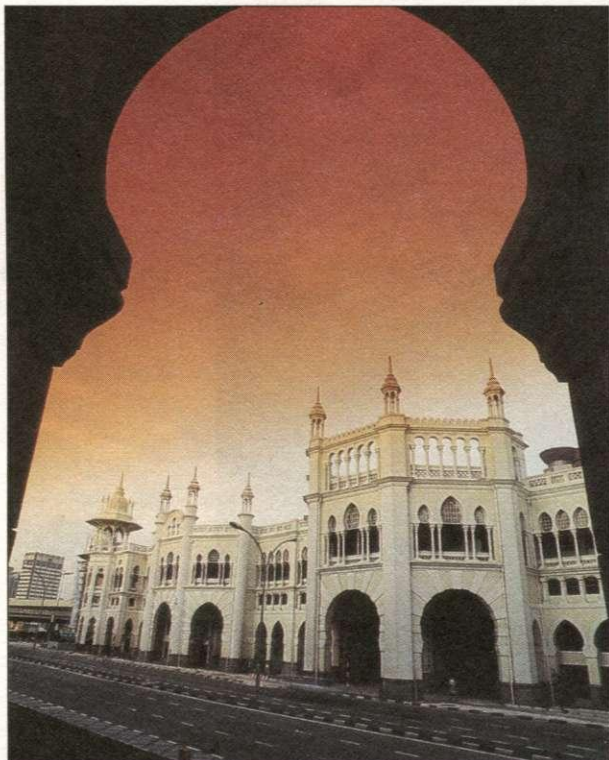
"We should avoid that at all cost," Sieh said. "Hoteliers should treat the Commonwealth Games as a bonus to their room occupancy, and not a means to raise rates."

Despite the projected increase in the number of hotel rooms, some travel agents are already resigned to the fact that there would not be enough rooms to attract more foreign visitors. They feel that the Games' athletes which would number in the region of 6,000, the army of officials and volunteers as well as local spectators, would fill up all available hotels. And that as such, there's no need for them to do anything about the Games.

Sources in the travel trade hazard a conservative guess that there would be about 40,000 to 50,000 foreign visitors at the height of the Games. That plus the 6,000 athletes and scores of sports officials and volunteers, should raise the occupancy level in the Klang Valley hotels to near full, says one hotelier, who declined to be named.



A service-oriented tourism industry ... an information centre personnel giving tourists helpful tips



Two of KL's landmarks
... The KL Railway
Station (right) and the
Sultan Abdul Samad
Building (below)



At the same time, domestic tourists should not be forgotten. Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister YB Dato' Sabbaruddin Cik says that as the country prospers, hotel occupancy rates will rise as more people would be disinclined to stay with relatives while away from home.

Sports officials familiar with arrangements during such events say some hotels would be picked to host certain VIPs. And some would be selected to host national contingents. In other words, there is much to go round. The spin-off effects are tremendous.

Sieh also feels that Kuala Lumpur's accommodation facilities are generally better than that found

in many countries. C. L. Tham, another widely-travelled sports official, is of the opinion that facilities offered by Kuala Lumpur hotels rate higher in terms of service and quality compared with hotel facilities in the last Commonwealth Games in Victoria, Canada. There were a lack of five-star hotels and four-star hotels didn't measure up to standard, he says. Still, Canada chalked

up a profit of C\$4.6 million from the Games.

Service apartments should also be part of the Games' accommodation plans — should there be a lack of hotel rooms, Izat says. He also suggests arranging home-stays with local residents.

Minister Sabbaruddin encourages the concept of home-stays. It is an option Malaysians should explore when there is a shortage of rooms, he says, citing instances of people sleeping in their cars because of a shortage of rooms during peak season.

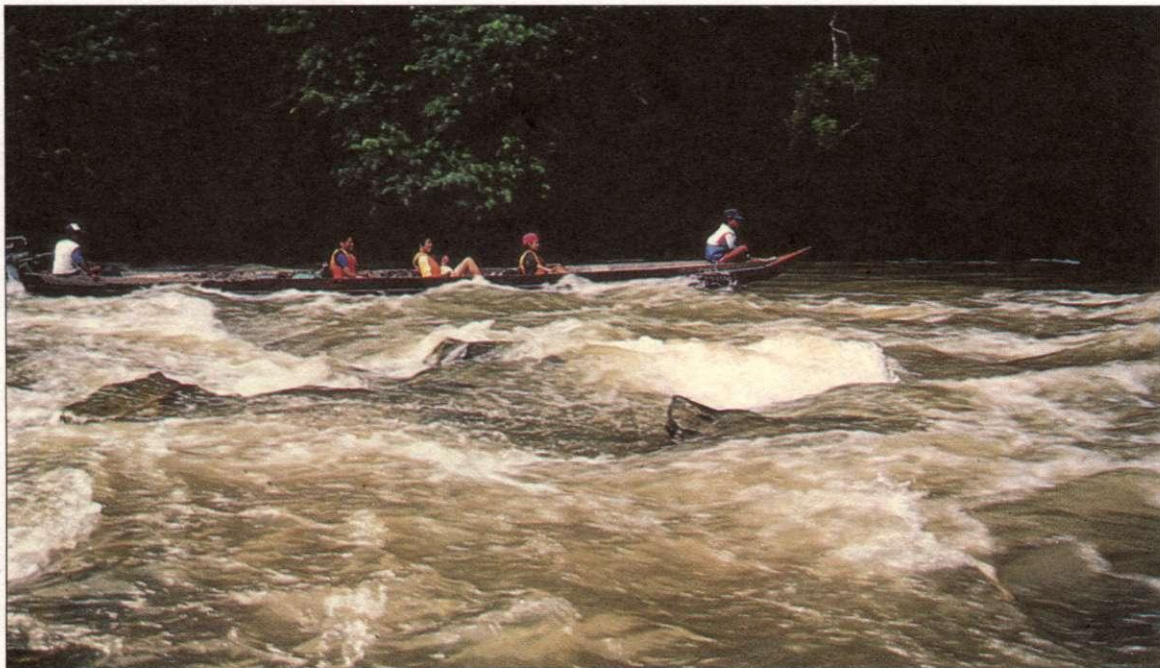
"This kind of situation calls for quick positive action and I believe that home-stays can alleviate the problem," he said.

Sieh recalls that home-stays were arranged successfully during the last Asian Games in Hiroshima, Japan, to enable foreign sports officials and athletes to "have a better taste and feel of the country".

He points out that "big-time" athletes usually have personal



Transport systems in Kuala Lumpur are expected to improve considerably by 1998



Taman Negara ... a rainforest adventure just north of the Malaysian capital

coaches or families accompanying them. Some athletes require special treatment and attention before their event. Service apartments would fit the bill nicely.

It has also been suggested that in the event of an acute shortage of accommodation, housing developers could be roped in to help by leasing out properties for a two-week period.

Kuala Lumpur's transport facilities are expected to improve considerably over the next three years. An industry source says the amalgamation of various bus companies should provide less of a headache then. The availability of LRT services will also enable visitors to travel to various Games' venues with relative ease.

It has been suggested that tickets sold for the Games should also incorporate the travel component and Sukom '98, the organisers of the Games, are believed to be working out the details.

Sieh suggests, however, that buses specially designated for the media be allowed to take Games spectators with tickets so as not to let existing facilities go to waste. Personal experience showed that media buses making the regular

rounds are usually half-full.

Travel agents and tour operators are among the beneficiaries of an international event such the Commonwealth Games. The key word is plenty; there are lots of places where officials, athletes and visitors can be taken to after the Games. These side trips should generate plenty of spin-offs.

Eco-tourism has, in recent years, emerged as a major selling point for Malaysian tourism. Minister Sabbaruddin says eco-tourism opportunities in the country offer much scope and development, more so with the safety element Malaysia is associated with compared with other South-East Asian countries.

However, Ahmad Kamil, President of the Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents (MATTA), says the authorities have yet to notify them officially on what role travel agents should play. The unofficial feedback is they they will be asked to help provide transport during the Games.

"We think we can do more," he added. The association has written to the Culture, Arts and Tourism Ministry offering the services of its members, he says.

Although Ahmad Kamil believes

there will be countless spin-offs for business during the Games, he is guarded on the scale of opportunities since MATTA has yet to receive official word.

Perhaps it's time to take stock of the situation, plan ahead and rein in the opportunities. Sukom '98 Executive Chairman Gen (Rtd) Tan Sri Hashim Mohamed Ali says that the organisers will strive to make the Games a success so that other developing countries would be encouraged to play host in future.

And it is Sukom 98's hope too, that the success of the Games will pave the way for greater progress and developed nation status at the dawn of the 21st century.

Profit projections made by Sukom '98 from TV rights, sale of tickets and merchandising are in the region of between RM80 million and RM100 million, a far cry from the C\$4.6 million amassed at the last Games in Victoria.

If we were to rely on the oft-quoted slogan of *Malaysia Boleh*, the tour and travel industry has a role to play in augmenting the profit figure. It would need to align itself to prepare for the thousands of visitors expected during the Games. That means taking the initiative now.

To help overseas travel agents sell Malaysia to their clients, Tourism Malaysia's on-going "Make It Malaysia" programme arranges for agents from various parts of the world to get a taste of Malaysian tourist attractions.

Over the months of April and May a total of 135 travel agents — 31 from South Africa, 28 from the Middle East and 76 from the United States and Canada — were taken on familiarisation tours of the country.

The first group from South Africa and the Middle East arrived on 28 April for a nine-day stay. They were feted to a welcome reception hosted by YB Dato' Sabbaruddin Chik, Malaysia's Minister of Culture, Arts &

GETTING TO KNOW US...



Tourism (third from right; picture above). The South African agents were shown around Sabah, Sarawak, Malacca, Taman Negara and Cherating, while their Middle East counterparts toured Malacca, Genting Highlands, Penang, Pangkor and Langkawi.

The itinerary for the second group, which visited from 15-25 May, covered Sarawak, Sabah, Taman Negara, Cherating, Cameron Highlands, Penang and Malacca.

As is usual with such familiarisation trips, the tour incorporated a travel mart and a farewell reception.

TOURISM MALAYSIA AWARDS 94/95

OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

Public Sector

Sepilok Orang Utan Rehabilitation Centre, Sandakan, Sabah

Private Sector

Sunway Theme Park
Bandar Sunway, Petaling Jaya

EXCELLENCE IN HOTEL SERVICES

Deluxe Hotel

Hotel Istana, Kuala Lumpur

First Class Hotel

Malacca Renaissance Hotel

Economy Class Hotel

Wenworth Hotel, Kuala Lumpur

Budget Class Hotel

Classic Hotel, Kuantan

Resort Hotel

Shangri-La's Rasa Sayang Resort, Penang

BEST TOURIST ATTRACTION

Pulau Redang Marine Park, Terengganu

BEST RESTAURANT

Malay Cuisine

Eliza Restaurant
The City Bayview Hotel, Penang

Chinese Cuisine

The Museum
Legend Hotel, Kuala Lumpur

Indian Cuisine

The Taj
Federal Hotel, Kuala Lumpur

Eastern Cuisine

Seki Tei
Holiday Villa, Subang Jaya, Selangor

Western Cuisine

Lafite
Shangri-La Hotel, Kuala Lumpur

BEST SHOPPING COMPLEX

Mahkota Parade, Malacca

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BEST TOUR PACKAGE

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Api Tours (Borneo) Sdn Bhd
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Assistant Head Waiter
The Terrace
The Regent, Kuala Lumpur

BEST ENTERTAINMENT CENTRE

Sunway Theme Park
Bandar Sunway, Petaling Jaya

BEST TOURISM ARTICLE

Bahasa Melayu

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by Normalah Hamzah in *Mingguan Malaysia*

Other Languages

"Birdwatching in Beautiful Penang"
By Andrew Ponnampalam in the *New Straits Times*

BEST TOURISM VIDEO

"Pahang the Complete Travel Experience"
Pahang State Development Corporation



THE MALAYSIAN TOUCH

Summer camps should have a Malaysian identity, their organisers have been told. The message came from Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister YB Dato' Sabbaruddin Chik when he launched a seminar on "Summer Camps — Management and Operation" in Kuala Lumpur on 5 May.

Datuk Sabbaruddin said summer

camps in Europe and North America were different as they operated only during the summer season. Malaysian summer camps, however, could take advantage of the consistent climate and operate throughout the year.

Camps could include such activities as computer classes, tuition, religious classes, football or golf clinics besides the usual activities

of going back to nature and jungle trekking, he added.

The four-day seminar was attended by about 200 participants and included a trip to Jeram Besu in Raub, Pahang for a hands-on experience in challenging outdoor pursuits like abseiling, high ropes traversing, whitewater rafting and rafting using improvised rafts. Invited speakers deliberated on various aspects of summer camp operations, from financial to environmental concerns.



PARADE OF TOP CATS

LAST year's Delima/Langkawi International Cat Show drew such positive response from participants, visitors and sponsors that Tourism Malaysia has decided to make it an annual event. Turnout at the show numbered about 10,000 people and 200 cats (winners pictured above). This year's show, scheduled from 4-8 September, lists a seminar, cat carnival, concert, funfair and golf tournament in its line-up of events.

ORCHID HITS

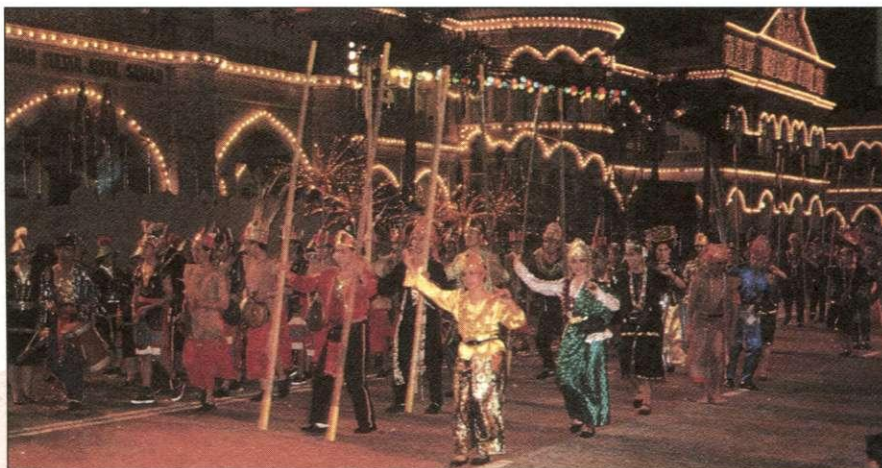
THE Shah Alam Municipal Council celebrates the country's 9,000 orchid species with the 5th Shah Alam International Orchid Exhibition and Competition. Orchids from 24 countries will be displayed at this year's exhibition, to be held from 17-23 August at Taman Tasik Shah Alam.

There will also be an Individual Orchid Competition, Orchids Landscape Competition, floral arrangement, photography contest, stage performances, as well as a trade forum.

Prior to the 5th Shah Alam International Orchid Exhibition and Competition, Shah Alam has hosted various orchid shows, among them the 1994 Asia Pacific Orchid Show and an Asian level show in 1993.

For more information, contact:
Shah Alam Municipal Council (MPSA),
1st Floor, Wisma MPSA,
Pesiaran Perbandaran, 40675 Shah Alam.
Tel: 03-550-5133, 559-5248/5350/5432
Fax: 03-550-8010





MALAYSIA FEST '95

Malaysia Fest 1995, scheduled for 16-30 September, celebrates the many facets and delights of Malaysia, from cultural polyglot to varied cuisines, from traditional pastimes to handicraft.

This year's two-week festival will have as its theme "Kuala Lumpur — A Cultural Park".

Almost all major hotels and shopping complexes will join this extravaganza, offering food and cultural promotions.

In short, it will be the best of Malaysia in one place.

The activities planned include:

- ◆ Official Launch — Stage performances by dancers/musicians from the National Cultural Complex (KBN) (16 Sept., Putra World Trade Centre);
- ◆ Choir Festival (17 Sept., DBKL Auditorium);
- ◆ Teh Tarik & Roti Canai Competition (17 Sept., Sungei Wang Plaza);
- ◆ Contemporary Drama by the Actors Studio (17-24 Sept., MATIC Auditorium);
- ◆ Hotel & Shopping Complex Activities (17-30 Sept.);
- ◆ Heritage Cuisine (18-25 September, MATIC);
- ◆ "Pesta Emping" (18-25 Sept., MATIC);
- ◆ Traditional Dances (18-25 Sept., MATIC);
- ◆ Domestic Tourism Exposition (21-24 Sept., Sogo Shopping Complex);
- ◆ Culinaire Malaysia '95 (23-25 Sept., Putra World Trade Centre);
- ◆ Top Spinning Competition (23 -30 Sept., Lake Titiwangsa);
- ◆ Creative Workshop for Children (24 Sept., Sogo Shopping Complex);
- ◆ Food Hotel Malaysia '95 (24-27 Sept., Putra World Trade Centre);
- ◆ Golf Tournament (30 Sept., Kelab Golf Negara Subang); and
- ◆ International Festival of Gong Ensemble (Date & Venue: TBA).



For more information, contact:
 Malaysia Fest 1995 Secretariat,
 Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board,
 26th Floor, Menara Dato' Onn,
 Putra World Trade Centre,
 45, Jalan Tun Ismail, 50480 Kuala Lumpur.
 Tel: 03-293-5188; Fax: 03-293-5884

MIDDLE EAST MISSION

Tourism Malaysia's sales mission to the Middle East from 13-30 April focussed on the cities of Jeddah and Riyadh in Saudi Arabia, and Amman in Jordan.

It was the third such mission to the Middle East in as many years, and coincided with a Malaysian Food Festival in Jeddah. The Middle



Prideful blossoms

Tourism Malaysia's London Office showed off Malaysia's flower power by winning a medal at this year's Chelsea Flower Show.

A colourful array of tropical blooms and plants so inspired the judges it won the Silver Gilt Medal.

A plane load of exotic flowers and plants — from orchids to mango trees and pomegranate plants — was flown in from Malaysia for the show. Quite aptly, the finishing touches to the display were provided by Malaysian girls in national costume carrying in the vibrant, fragrant blooms.



East, in particular the countries of Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain and Jordan, is considered a major market for Malaysian tourism, and tourist arrivals from the four countries numbered 19,724 in 1994, or 73% of arrivals from the Middle East.

The objectives of the mission were to promote Malaysia under this year's 8-Destination campaign, boost the Malaysian travel trade and seek publicity in the market.

The mission to Jordan and Saudi Arabia was led by Tourism Malaysia's Director-General, En. Zainuddin Mohd. Zain, and included 11 hoteliers and four travel agents.

As with all Tourism Malaysia's sales missions, there was a seminar, press conference and travel mart organised in the three venues.

ARABIAN NIGHTS



Three Malaysian chefs whipped up dish upon dish of varied Malaysian cuisine in Jeddah for seven days and nights for a Food Festival held in Saudi Arabia from 17-23 April.

The festival was jointly organised by Tourism Malaysia, Malaysia Airlines and the Jeddah Inter Continental Hotel. A handicraftsman was also flown in to demon-



strate the fine art of songket weaving.

The event was graced by H.E. Ambassador Mohd. Husain Bin Haji Shafie, the Malaysian

Ambassador to Saudi Arabia. Other guests included the Malaysian Consul General, En. Mohd. Takwir Din and Trade Commissioner En. Abdullah Sani Baharin.

Swiss timing

Tourism Malaysia's Milan Office made an appearance at the Zurich FESPO, sharing a booth with Malaysia Airlines. The annual fair, held earlier this year, attracted more than 80,000 visitors. The Malaysian Ambassador to Switzerland, H.E. En. Harun Siraj (second from right, bottom picture), dropped in at the Malaysian booth.



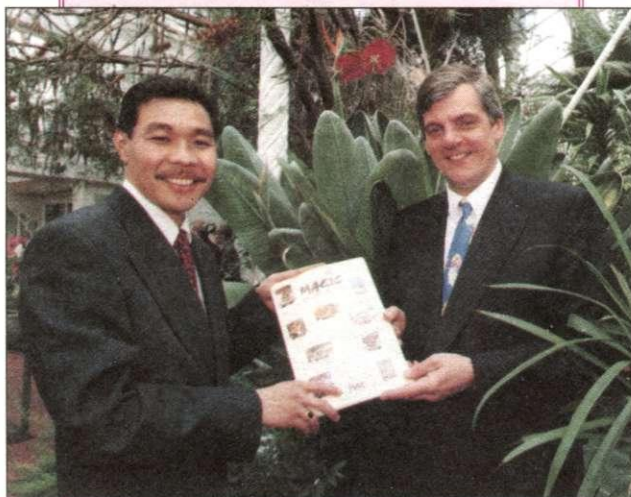
A week in the wild

A couple from Birmingham has won a jungle adventure in Malaysia following a day out among the tropical plants at Birmingham's Botanical Gardens.

The Botanical Gardens had jointly organised a competition with Tourism Malaysia's London Office and Far East tour specialists Magic of the Orient, offering the prize of a week-long encounter with some of the world's most luxuriant plant life.

Many exotic plants found in the humid jungles of Malaysia can be seen in the tropical glass house in Birmingham's Botanical Gardens and Glasshouses.

Jim Slater and his wife Diane's entry were drawn from among thousands answering questions about wild tropical plants.



The Slaters, both professionals in education, will trek through rainforest in Sabah and view a display of hibiscus and orchids in the Lake Gardens of Kuala Lumpur.

The couple correctly answered that the world's largest flower, Rafflesia, grows in the Malaysian jungle up to a diameter of three feet and that the *Nepenthes Villosa* is also known as pitcher plant.

Tourism Malaysia's London Office Director En. Mohd Zuhuri Ahmad presented the prize.



JOURNEY TO AFRICA

Some 350 travel trade participants from 60 countries displayed holiday ideas at the World Holiday and Travel Fair in Johannesburg from 20-23 April.

Malaysia's presence at the fair, its second year of participation, was spearheaded by Tourism Malaysia's Johannesburg Office. Meanwhile, seven tour operators from Malaysia flew to Johannesburg for the fair.

The fair, held at the Kyalami Exhibition centre, attracted about 30,000 visitors.





AN INDIAN AFFAIR

Tourism Malaysia was among 400-odd participants from around the world at the South Asia Travel & Tourism Exchange (SATTE 1995), held in New Delhi from 19-21 April.

SATTE 1995 featured two components: a Travel Mart and workshop/technical sessions.

The Malaysian delegation was led by Tourism Malaysia's Director-General, En. Zainuddin Mohd. Zain.

Reaching out to Chiangmai

An array of Malaysian food and culture was offered to Thais in the northern Thai city of Chiangmai in May. The food and cultural promotion, held in conjunction with Malaysia Airlines' (MAS) inaugural flight to Chiangmai, was jointly organised by Tourism Malaysia, MAS and Mae Ping Hotel.

The promotion, which ran for 10 days beginning 3 May, sought to generate more interest among the Thais in the various tourist attractions and cultural heritage of Malaysia.

A trade night was held for about 250 guests and cultural performances were staged at the Chiangmai Night Bazaar and Kad Suan Kaew Shopping Complex.



FLESHY DESIGNS

Long ears, studded teeth, tattoos ... Heidi Munan writes about such 'cosmetic deformation' that people undertake at considerable pain — for the sake of beauty

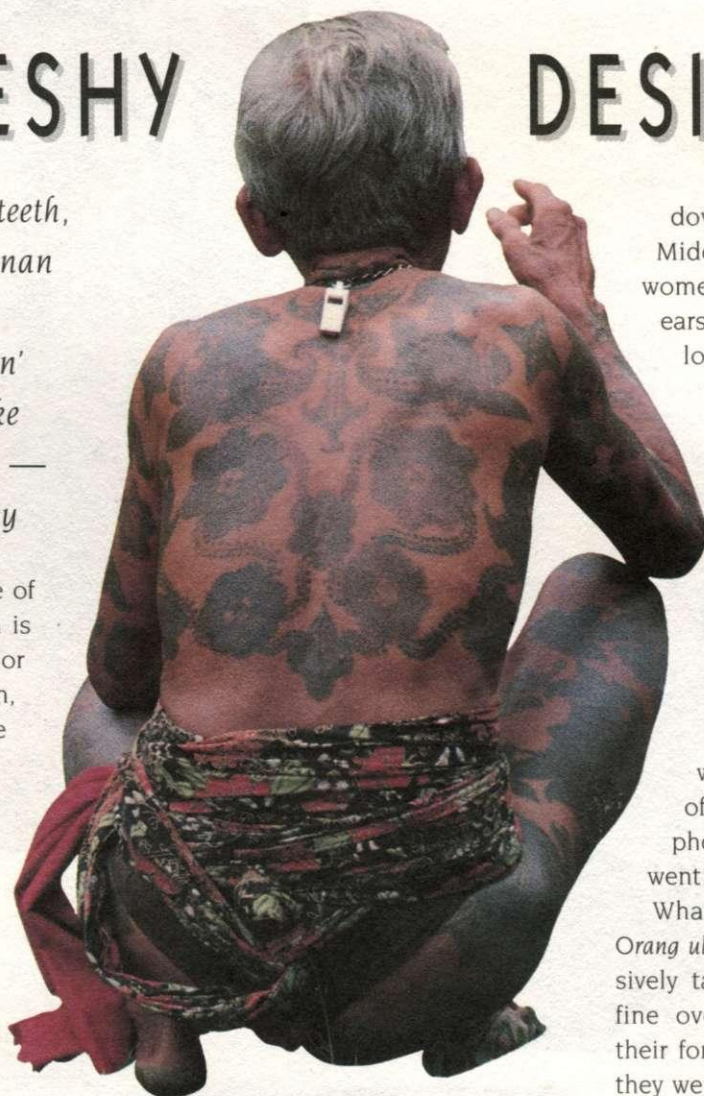
Beauty lies in the eye of the beholder. Which is beautiful: long hair or short, blue eyes or brown, big feet or small, white teeth or black?

Black teeth? Yes indeed, until the last century any number of people in the islands of Southeast Asia went to considerable trouble to blacken their teeth. An inquisitive traveller was informed, rather tartly, that his white teeth looked "like a dog's."

Teeth were blackened with corrosive plant juices, teeth were filed to sharp points, teeth were perforated and studded with gold or precious stones — generations of young people must have suffered tortures of rough-and-ready dentistry for the sake of beauty.

My mother would have called such sufferings, unsympathetically: "The pain of the vain". Anthropologists classify them as "cosmetic deformation". Forcibly modified teeth were not the only painful mark of beauty in Borneo; there were long ears, and then there were tattoos.

Long ears used to be an *orang*



down to her shoulders. Middle-aged and elderly women still have these long ears, but the fashion is no longer popular with the young set. A number of girls, especially those who settled and work "downriver" away from their home villages, get such elongated lobes surgically removed. "It's only a snip and a stitch," one explains. Why did she want her ears cropped? "I was getting sick and tired of people staring at me, and photographing me wherever I went!"

What about tattoos, then? *Orang ulu* ladies used to be extensively tattooed in the past, with fine overall designs that made their forearms and legs look as if they were wearing lacy gloves and stockings.

The extent of tattooing was determined by various considerations. The girl's ability to bear pain was one of them. She lay on a mat,

ulu lady's mark of beauty and wealth: on festive occasions she wore valuable, heavy brass earrings which extended her slit earlobes

Courtesy Sarawak Museum



Central Borneo men in the 50s with extensive tattoos and elongated ears. Top: Iban man tattooed all over his back, arms and thighs.

held steady by female relatives if there was some doubt about her self-control, while the tattoo artist's pin-hammer went tap-tap-tap along the lines of the pattern. All day, for many days. When one part got too swollen for further work, another could be worked on.

The pain of the vain! Lack of tattoos, or worse still incomplete tattoos, reduced a girl's value in the marriage stakes, as she herself

Right: Iban man in festival dress and arm tattoos.

Below: Orang Ulu woman with tattoos covering her thighs down to calf level and her lower arms.

Bottom: Designs on the feet of an Orang Ulu woman



Courtesy Sarawak Museum

well knew.

Some communities restricted the designs and amount of tattoos by social status. Economics comes into it too: a young lady's elaborate tattoos proved that her family could dispense with her labour for months at a time, pay the expert tattoo artists and provision the feasts and sacrifices that marked various stages of the work.

An *orang ulu* lady was tattooed at home. Iban men usually got their marks of valour while on an extended journey, trading and raiding in the past, working in the oil-fields, the logging industry or serving with the armed forces nowadays. A fine spread used to be a man's re-entry visa: "Look at his tattoos! He must be an accom-

Courtesy Sarawak Museum



plished traveller, a brave man!"

In these days of shirts and long trousers, the most noticeable Iban tattoo is the "scorpion" on a man's throat. His back and shoulders sport "flowers" symmetrically

arranged, his forearms may be decorated with "frogs". Much depends on the wearers and his chosen artist's skill.

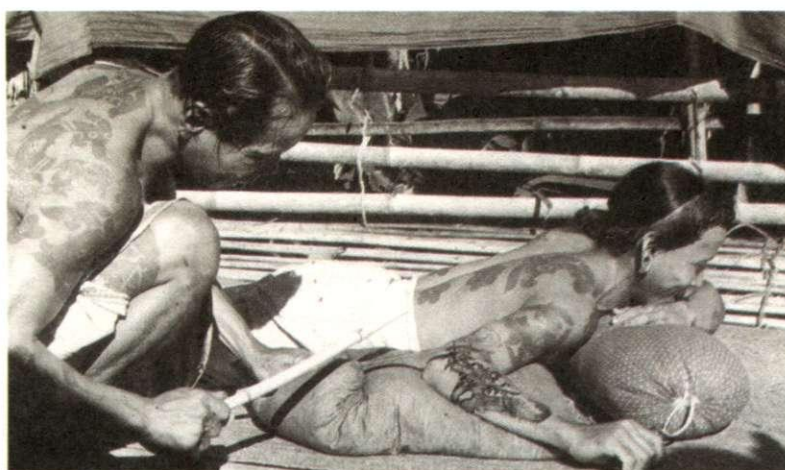
Iban women are rarely tattooed, maybe a wrist was encircled by a "necklace" or a "bead" once to heal sickness. A boy's first tattoo, fish-hook on calf, was sometimes done for the same reason.

In some regions, however, women have dots or circles on a finger or thumb: these denote the skilled weaver and dyer, the leader on the "women's warpath" as the mystery of the loom is called. A dot or two on the back of a man's fingers tells the same tale. He too was a war leader once, but in a more realistic sense than his wife.

Unlike long ears, tattoos can't just be snipped off, even if the wearer finds they no longer fit in with his or her modern lifestyle. They certainly are going out of fashion. The few young men who

Right: A tattooist at work. This picture was taken about 40 years ago.

Below: Orang ulu lady with tattooed hands and feet, and elegant ear weights



wear tattoos are likely to have them done in town, in a "tattoo parlour" which specialises in dragons, nymphs and hearts.

Heart tattoos may take strange forms, however: continental tourists, especially the middle-aged, are appalled to see longhouse women with large numbers etched into their forearms. Half a world and half a century away from the horrors of concentration camps, what can be the meaning of this? The meaning is, as I said, hearts: the woman's husband served in the army or police in their young days. They lived in the barracks together before returning to the longhouse. And the good lady, heart-under-the-sleeve, still proudly wears his serial number.

A TALE OF TWO BIRDIES

Long long ago, when the world was new, all birds were of an ordinary brown colour. Most of them were quite happy about this; all but *burung ruai* the argus pheasant. He was a handsome bird with long tail feathers, but he wanted to be even more beautiful.

"Let us make some good black colour!" he said to his plain cousin, *burung bubut* the coucal, "and let us tattoo each other's bodies."

The *bubut* agreed, and they started to prepare black dye in a shallow wooden dish. "Who should be decorated first?" the *bubut* asked.

"Me, me!" answered the vain *ruai*, eagerly fanning out his splendid tail. "I mean — try it out on me first. Just in case anything should go wrong. You never know..."

The *bubut* said nothing more, but got down to work. All day he etched fine designs, swirls and circles, into his cousin's plumage. It was late afternoon when the last magnificent eye at the tip of the last tail feather had been completed.

As soon as the operation was finished, the *ruai* strutted to the nearby river to look at his reflection in the still water. He was very pleased. "Let's go to meet the other birds!" he cried happily. "They will be surprised to see my beauty — I mean, to see your beautiful handiwork!"

"Not so fast, cousin!" the *bubut* remonstrated. "Let's finish here first. It's your turn to tattoo me now. You promised."

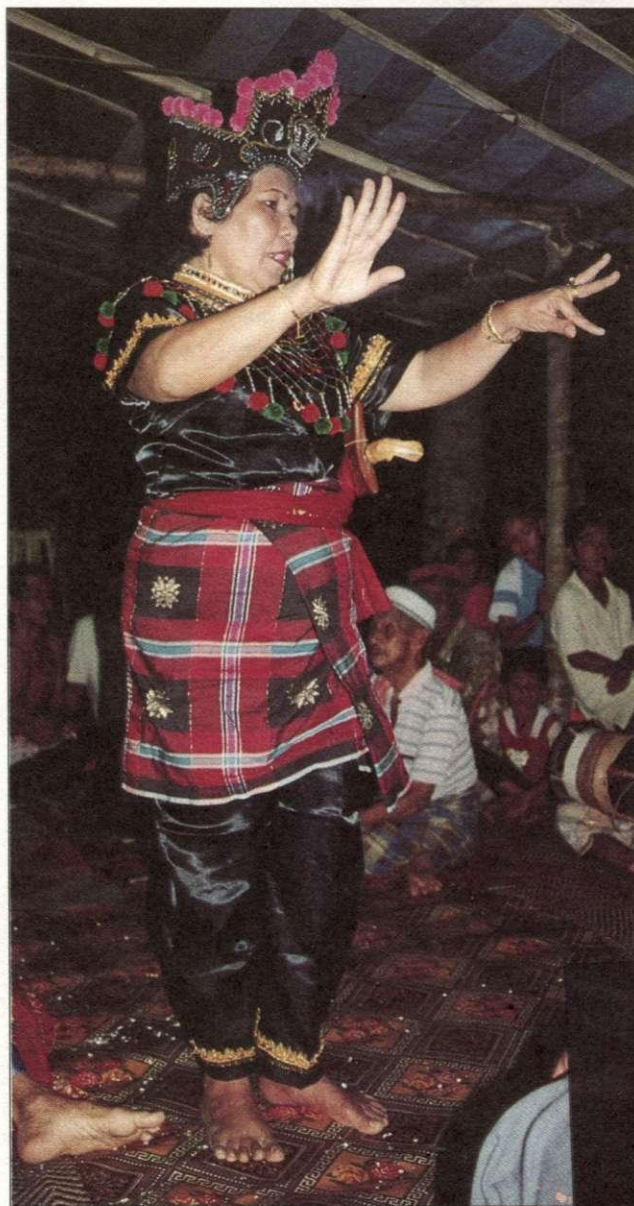
The *ruai* came back very unwillingly. Quickly he daubed the *bubut*'s feathers, without much care. The *bubut* sat still, tired from having worked all day. When the *ruai* realised that his cousin had dozed off, he quickly tipped all the black colour over him and rushed off, leaving the sleeping bird sitting in a black puddle.

The dye they used was the same kind people now use for tattooing. Once it is applied, it will never wash off. To this day, the argus pheasant is beautifully patterned, while the coucal has a black head, tail and belly, and brown wings of the plainest kind.

The Iban have made a proverb out of this story. This is what they say when somebody repays kindness with insult and injury: "Just like the *ruai* did to the *bubut*."

The Mak Yong, with its haunting quality, is one of the most beautiful dance-theatre forms in South-East Asia

THE SOUL OF MAK YONG



The splendour of the Mak Yong lies in its intricate and delicate hand movements.

Right: The Pak Yong lead role is played by a woman, reflecting the feminine origins of the art form.

Barely fifteen kilometres from Kota Bharu, in the north-eastern state of Kelantan, lies a remote, barely noticed island off the coast of the Kelantan River. Inhabited by a spattering of some 100 people, the residents of Pulau Renjuna live off the sea, gaining their livelihood as fishermen.

What is little known to the rest of the country, is the fact that Pulau Renjuna remains one the country's most resplendent cultural and artistic mines — home to some of the finest and most revered practitioners of the traditional Malay art form of the *Mak Yong*.

The 'grand lady' of the *Mak Yong*, the late Che Ning frequently performed on the island. Kak Neb, among the last remaining exponents of the form, is also a regular visitor there. Then there is Pak Su Seman, perhaps the most articulate and profound player of the Malay spike-fiddle, the *rebab*, the lead instrument in the *Mak Yong* orchestra, who has been resident on the island since birth.

Today, despite the overwhelming odds that confront these performers (not least of which is the ban by the PAS led government on public performances of the *Mak Yong*), they continue to stage private performances — for healing and medicinal purposes — in an attempt to revive a gradually eclipsing art form that, at one time, was unrivalled in its capacity to encapsulate the Kelantanese spirit and sensibility.

Little is known of the history of the *Mak Yong* though both exponents of the form and serious students have come to regard it as perhaps the most indigenous of Malay art forms with no noticeable lineage to Siamese or Indonesian influences.

Traditional belief rests in the myth that the *Mak Yong* emerged during the reign of the four queens of Patani many centuries ago. This would perhaps



Story and pictures by Pak Dogol



The 'Mengahadap Rebab' consecrates and allows for the smooth flow of performance.

Right: Comedy is an essential part of the Mak Yong, lending it a spontaneity and humorous quality.



account for the fact that all lead roles in the *Mak Yong*, whether male (the *Pak Yong*) or female (the *Mak Yong*) are played by women.

The *Mak Yong* remains among the most beautiful of theatre-dance forms in the South-East Asian region. Comprising mainly dance, song and comedy or *lakon* the *Mak Yong* retains a haunting quality that evokes an ethereal sense of loss that is at the heart of *Mak Yong* performance.

This plaintive, lamentative quality of the *Mak Yong* song is believed to lie within the spirit of a mother pining for the soul of her dead son. This mother is believed to be the original performer and progenitor of the art form.

The *Mak Yong* comprises some 12 major stories, or *cerita pokok* from

which branch stories, or *cerita ranting* are inspired. These epics recount tales of kings and queens, princes and princesses, holy men, mystical men, evil men — epics which speak of the mythical past of the Kelantanese people. These are grand stories replete with tragedy, melodrama and comedy. But most of all, they exude that sense of pathos and wonderment that lies at the heart of the Malay world-view.

The *Mak Yong* was, at one time, offered royal patronage. Birthday celebrations of the Sultan of Kelantan, for example, were always consecrated by, foremostly, prayers and then a *Mak Yong* performance. Public performances, meanwhile, were rife. These proved highly lucrative and successful affairs with crowd attendance commonly reach-

ing the thousands. Performers like the late Che Ning, Khadijah Awang and 'Mak Su' Miriam 'Titisan Air Mata' were not uncommonly regarded as 'stars'.

But the vicissitudes of modern life, the urban thirst for 'quick-fix' forms of entertainment and general neglect has meant that these legendary figures are forced to lead a 'hand to mouth' existence today. Many of them have been forced to work, either as menial labourers or confined to eking a living from such cottage industries as making *keropok* (fish crackers) and drying fish.

The late Che Ning was found to be working at a *keropok* factory at Kuala Besut as a menial labourer before her death. Due to the lack of medical attention and care, she succumbed to cancer without even knowing that she had been afflicted by the disease. Kak Neb, who remains one of the last living practitioners of the form, meanwhile, prefers to print batik because "... it has proved more lucrative ..."

Whereas in some countries figures such as Che Ning and Kak Neb would be regarded as 'National Living Treasures' with a stable allowance from the government and viability of livelihood earned by teaching; here, these legendary figures continue to live a pitiful existence, denied of opportunities for performance and a means of earning a livelihood through their art.

It is a sad irony that as the nation extols the virtues of 'getting to know itself', it has allowed for this slow but sure emaciation of one of its proudest and distinguished art and cultural forms.

A different route to the longhouse and an encounter with ...

THE BIGGEST BORE IN SARAWAK

Below: The tidal bore rushes in; this is an "everyday" one so the express driver decided to face it.
Right: The bore is supposed to bring a lot of fish with it.



Stories and pictures by Heidi Munan



Almost every visitor to Sarawak wants to visit the original house of Borneo's natives. The problem is that visitors arrive in Kuching, at the coast, and the longhouses are "upriver".

A typical Skrang tour leaves Kuching at nine a.m. The first stop is at about ten o'clock, in the market town of Serian. It's a good place for a cup of tea, for buying fresh fruit, something to nibble, film, cigarettes, batteries ...

The trip continues, the road unrolling between smallholdings, pepper gardens, farmhouses and villages, a school here and a brickworks there. A lovely green landscape, but not much variety. At noon comes the lunch stop at Lachau, a bazaar which moved from the nearby river to the roadside and has been flourishing ever since.

The trip continues, the landscape looks pretty much the same, until, towards three o'clock, the river jetty is reached and the journey proceeds by boat. But the bus trip was, so most travellers agree, long and monotonous.

Do they know that they bypassed one of Sarawak's oldest townships, Simanggang (Sri Aman) on the Batang Lupar river, with its 130-year-

old bastion Fort Alice? At the cost of adding 10 km of feeder road to their journey, they can enjoy lunch in a typical "bazaar" town, nose around shops and markets, and stroll along the busy waterfront of a town that grew up when the river was the only highway. If they're in luck, they may even see the biggest bore in Sarawak.

The denizens of Sri Aman are modestly proud of this bore. It isn't

No skipper wants to meet it, though; express boats adjust their timetables to it.

The full moon, new moon or King Tide bore, however, is a spectacular and noisy affair. It is heard approaching from Kampung Hilir like a distant train. Boat owners rush to the waterfront to slacken their lines, the bigger vessels steam out to mid-river to meet it bows-on. And then the river is three metres deeper, the bore has roared around the bend of Kampung Ulu and is gone.

Simanggang, renamed Sri Aman in 1971, grew up in the shelter of the fort. Built on the highway of a navigable river that reaches far inland, it was an outstation par excellence for decades. In the 1930s, Sarawak's Top Security Prison was here, if that's quite the right word: most inmates functioned as unpaid PWD labourers. The nice term for a custodial sentence was "helping the government". Maugham's ill-fated boat was rowed by government-employed "lifers".

Those days are gone. Sri Aman is heading for the 21st century with the rest of the nation. Only a few rows of the old shophouses remain, near the river. But Sri Aman remains Simanggang when it comes to its



On a Sunday, the old pasar is surrounded by a streetside market

just the biggest of its kind, it's historical: this bore upset Somerset Maugham on his visit to Sarawak in the 1930s, and nearly put an untimely end to a distinguished writing career! It is a tidal bore, a wall of water that roars upriver after incoming waters collected further downriver have reached overflowing point. The daily bore is fairly tame: a few waves and a rapid rise in water level.



people. Today's descendants of the pioneering traders occupy modern premises, but they cater to the up-country sellers of farm and jungle produce, the buyers of consumer

goods, like their forbears did.

A few restaurants in Sri Aman will put on a fine lunch spread; for larger groups it is wise to phone an order from Kuching. The food is Chinese or

Malay, featuring fresh fish — river fish or sea fish. One type of fish is often sold in the bazaar, and it's worth looking and asking for: *ikan salai*. Strictly speaking an immigrant, *ikan salai* is smoke-dried freshwater fish from the shallow lakes of the upper Kapuas River in Indonesian Kalimantan. It has been an item of the old riverborn Borneo trade since time immemorial — and it tastes nice! The dry, crumbly fish is slightly smoky, quite dry, and can be eaten as a tidbit, or cooked with ginger, pepper and jungle shoots to make a tasty soup.

Seasoned travellers may prefer to look for lunch at the open market. It's not airconditioned, but one can stroll from stall to stall and spy out the land.

In 1849 the White Rajah of Sarawak, James Brooke, built a fort at Nanga Skrang "to stop the Ibans from coming downriver". A large number of Ibans lived in the upper reaches of the Batang Lupar system. They came downriver to trade, and sometimes to raid — in those days the Iban counted among Borneo's fiercest warriors.

In 1864 the fort was shifted eight miles downriver to its present site at Simanggang, and considerably enlarged. What follows is history, oft-repeated throughout Sarawak: the sheltering hand of the government attracted a few traders, chapel and school followed. Soon a tidy township stood on the banks of the river, commercial and political centre of a wide district.

Sir Charles Brooke, James' nephew and successor, was very attached to Simanggang and its people. The young bride Rajah Charles brought to Sarawak to be his Raneé in 1870, and after whose middle name he later called the Fort, discovered that a Simanggang lass had presented Sir Charles with a son a few years earlier.

A fort called Alice



Fort Alice is built entirely of *belian* hardwood. Stout ship's cannon are trained on the river, from whence trouble could be expected to come, and frequently did. In her memoirs, the Raneé re-counts one occasion when the Rajah had

gone upriver, leaving her in charge of the Fort with a garrison of an elderly Malay retainer, a Yorkshire terrier and two ladies. Rats and mosquitoes were the worst dangers she had expected to encounter, but a flotilla of 15 war boats appeared. These warriors probably didn't intend to attack Simanggang, they only wanted to sail to the sea for a spot of raiding. With courage cleverly mixed with bluff, the Raneé managed to hold them off until the Rajah's return, "and when all was said and done," she wrote, years later, "I had quite enjoyed the novel experience."

Today the old Fort dozes quietly on its hill overlooking the river and the town. It is managed by the Sarawak Museum; work is under way to make it a District Museum. Even in its time-worn condition Fort Alice is worth a visit; the view alone repays the slight effort of climbing the hill.

LEGENDS AND PAGEANTS



The legend of Huminodun brings the different native groups of Sabah together to honour and celebrate the spirit of the harvest festival

Story by Rosemary Chin Garces
Pictures by Tommy Chang

Unduk Ngadau in Kadazandusun literally means "zenith of the sun". During the Pesta Kaamatan or Harvest Festival, a Queen is chosen from among young women from the various districts of Sabah to represent the

ideal that epitomises Huminodun.

The legend of Huminodun tells how, when the lands were infertile, a couple named Kinoingan and Suminundu, the Creator of Man and the Holy and Miraculous one respectively, sacrificed their only child Huminodun to the spir-

its of the rice, Bambaazon, for the survival of mankind.

Various parts of her body were sown as seeds from which the life-sustaining crop *padi* sprang. When the time came for Kinoingan and Suminundu to ascent to the heavens, a great feast was held in honour of Huminodun. As Kinoingan blew a tune on his bamboo flute and called out her name, the padi husk jar suddenly yielded none other than Huminodun herself, bringing joy to all present. The three then bade farewell to their guests and rose to the heavens.

From this legend comes the significance of Unduk Ngadau, symbolising youth, modesty, love, obedience, purity and beauty, of all which Huminodun stood for.

The Pesta Kaamatan is held in Sabah every year during the month of May. Each district would hold their own celebrations which culminate with a state-level carnival over the last two days of the month.

Traditional sports are participated in with great gusto. These range from tug-of-war between



The annual state-level Unduk Ngadau pageant.
Top: The Sumazau tribe of Penampang district.



entire villages, buffalo races where the normally placid *kerbau* goes thundering across the grounds, their riders hanging on for dear life, and finger and arm wrestling. More serious are the gong competitions where winning is considered earning respect for one's kampung or village.

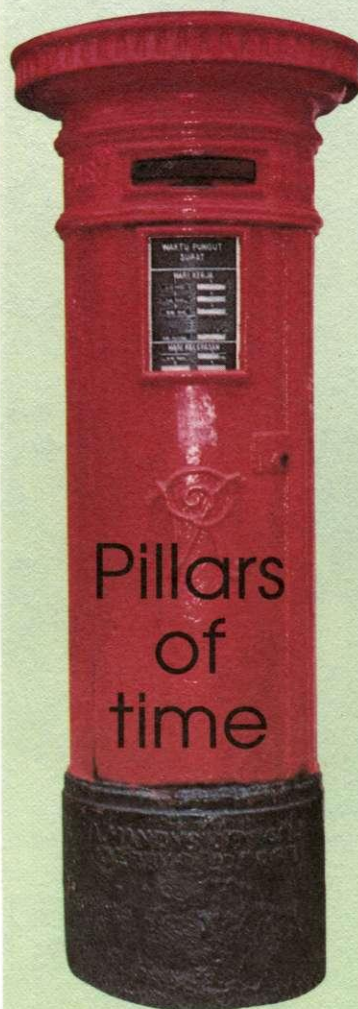
There are native-style dishes and drinks reflecting the Pesta Kaamatan mood and contests are held for the best recipes being organised.

Then of course, there is the Unduk Ngadau. The young ladies, dressed in elaborate costumes representing the various districts, are a sight to behold.

Most of the costumes are in basic black, some of cotton, others of velvet, but always adorned with shimmering trims and gold buttons and embroidery. Beadwork, silver-dollar bells called *himpogot*, row upon heavy row of metal rings strung on rattan and worn around slender hips, bells on hems and all design of headdress are proudly worn by the women eager to show off their heritage. Many of the costumes are heirlooms and priceless.

But more importantly, the spirit of Pesta Kaamatan brings the different native groups together to reflect on their one common link — the legend of Huminodun.

For more information, contact the Sabah Tourism Promotion Corporation, Locked Bag 112, 88999 Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. Tel: 088-212-121, Fax: 088-212-075.



Scattered around the island of Penang and mainland Seberang Prai are tubes in brilliant red that stand as silent symbols of a past era. Known as pillar boxes, the majority of these round, rectangular, or in some cases odd-shaped, relics of the British colonial days have since been replaced with modern post boxes, except for some 40 original models.

They pose an interesting sight, these tall tubes with the initials of various British rulers and the emblem of the Crown emblazoned on their facade. In fact, they chart the succession of the British throne.

For instance, three very old pillar boxes — on Beach Street, at the Chulia Street-Beach Street junction (picture, left), and in front of the Jelutong police station — are inscribed with the letters VR for Victoria Regina, the British Queen of the 18th Century.

According to a postmaster, the three have survived the elements for almost a century without rusting. Made of cast iron and standing about one and half metres high, they are said to be so heavy that it would take a crane to lift one.

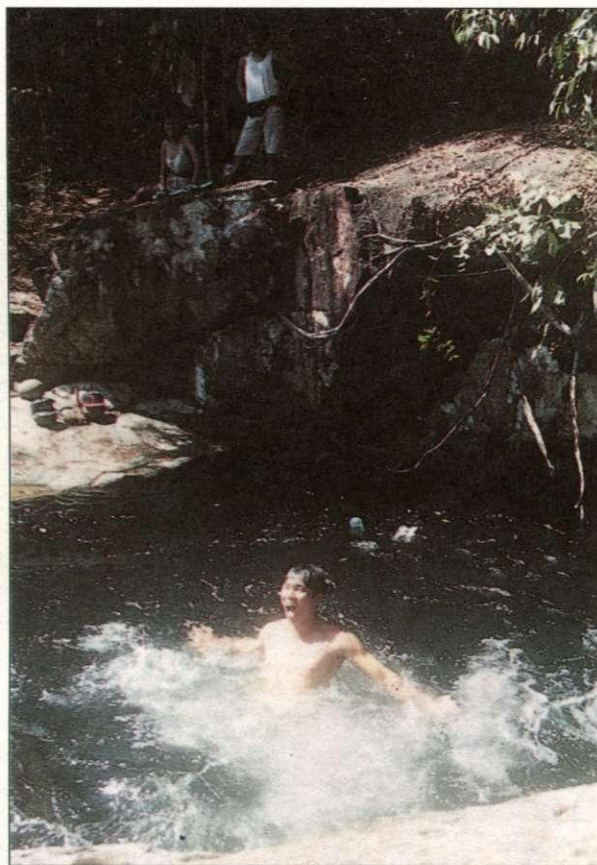
The initials of Queen Victoria's successor, Edward VII, appear on one round box in front of Wisma Kastam on China Street Ghaut. Then there are a few bearing the letters GR, which could have referred to either King George V or King George VI. When Queen Elizabeth II succeeded to the throne in 1953, all tubes manufactured thereafter bore her initials ER II. By 1957 English-made pillar boxes in Penang numbered 345.

The only unusually shaped pillar box can be found in Sungai Bakap on the mainland. Basically a rectangle, the box has a flank on either side, the resulting shape resembling a tombstone in a Chinese cemetery (picture, right).

Standing in the grounds of the Penang State Museum is a tube from the "GR" era, removed from its original site near the statue of Francis Light. Had it not been dug out, the name of the makers, A. Handyside & Co. Ltd., of Derby, England, would not have become visible. Reason being, a good one-third of the height of these red pillars is actually buried beneath the ground. — **Rose Gasper**



Few people know that some distance above Langkawi's seven pools is a pristine well hidden in the hills of Matcinchang



WELL, WELL, WHAT'S THIS...?

Story and pictures by Eric Chong

After hiking up the main trail to the upper parts of Seven Wells in Langkawi's Gunung Matcinchang, you're left drenched in sweat and wondering what the big deal is about.

There isn't a pool big enough to swim in. There's just enough water for one person to have a dip unless one doesn't mind bumping into another body. And there is usually quite a number of people around so the privacy of a good soak is out of the question.

Little do these people know that there is a bigger and more secluded pool tucked away further upstream, less than half an hour away from the main Seven Wells pool.

To get to this lost well, make for the point where two small streams meet. Take the path along the right stream. There are paths on either

side of the stream. Both trails lead to the lost well. Look out for red markers painted on the trees; they are a helpful guide on the route.

After about a kilometre's walk through primary forest, there is a trail leading uphill. There are no more markers at this point, but it is quite easy to spot the trail as it is well trodden. The trail leads uphill for about 100 metres before it tapers off. A few metres away it branches right, this time going downhill.

Some 50 metres down is the hidden well. The sounds of the stream can be heard on the trail to this well. Trekkers should bear in mind that if they are not within hearing range of the stream, it is possible they are on the wrong trail. If this is the case, backtrack and follow the stream instead. The hike from the

main upper pool to the hidden pool should not take more than 25 minutes.

The hidden well is about 15-18 feet in diameter and about 10 to 15 feet deep. The water is amazingly cool and refreshing ... well worth the sweat of the climb. The visibility of the water is limited only by the amount of light which hardly pene-



The trail (above) to the hidden well (top left and below) in the hilly terrains of Matcinchang



trates through the forest canopy. Here, the unpolluted mountain water tastes better than any bottled mineral water.

Locals who know of this secret well take pride in keeping the place clean and as pristine as they found it. The example is worth emulating.

WHAT'S NEW

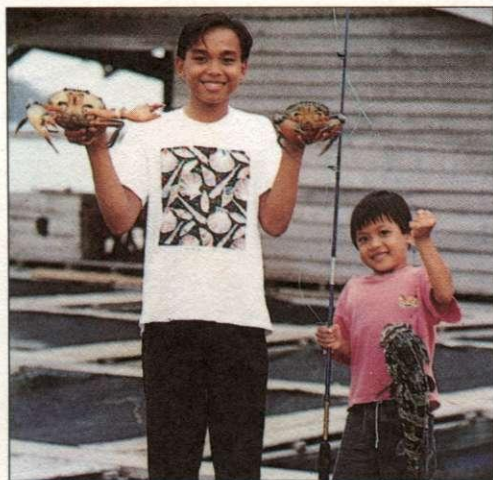


RAINFOREST LODGE

Borneo Eco Tours have opened their Sukau Rainforest Lodge on the banks of the Kinabatangan River. The 20-room lodge, built on stilts, incorporates local traditional art to blend with the natural setting. Facilities include a 15m tree platform, open sun deck facing the river, open-air restaurant, lounge, library, bar and gift shop. Wildlife and photography river tours are conducted from the lodge to look for proboscis monkeys and other wildlife along the river banks. Borneo Eco Tours can be reached at Tel: 088-234-009, Fax: 088-233-688.

SANGKAR IKAN LANGKAWI

Sangkar Ikan Langkawi at Pantai Penarak, near Kuah, is a floating fish cage built on a wooden platform. Various species of fish are bred by the local fishermen, including coral fish and commercial fish for local markets and restaurants. A pontoon bridge connects the platform to a restaurant on the beach which specialises in seafood and where customers may bring their catch to be cooked, in a style of their preference. Fishing rods and reels are available for rent and fish bait is sold at the fish cage. Entrance fee is RM4 for adults and RM2 for children. Sangkar Ikan Langkawi opens from 11.30am till 7.30pm. The restaurant can be reached at Tel: 04-966-8888; Fax: 04-966-6000



SHERATON in PENANG

The Sheraton Penang was officially opened on 1 May. The 283-room five-star hotel is the first ITT Sheraton to open in Malaysia as part of a chain that has 430 hotels worldwide. Sheraton Penang, located on Jalan Larut, is owned by Faber Hotels Holdings Sdn Berhad. Room facilities include a direct fax line, electronic personal safe, iron, remote-controlled TV and radio, and 24 hours CNN coverage.



IMAGES OF THE EAST

Royal Selangor's Images of the East collection, launched in May, are a series of six handcrafted miniature interpretations of Malaysian architectural heritage. Made of bonded porcelain and pewter, these sculptured collectibles are designed after quaint Chinese shophouses, mosques and temples, and KL's famed landmark, the Sultan Abdul Samad Building. The miniatures retail at RM160 upwards per piece and are available at all Royal Selangor showrooms.

COOKING UP A GOOD GUIDE

Title: **Malaysia: Land of Eternal Summer**

Author: **Debbie and David Cook**

Publisher: **Wilmette Publications**

The travel book is easily among the most popular book forms in the publishing world today. Travel writing, in its variety of genres, has advanced in tandem with the breaking down of boundaries among nations, peoples and perceptions.

The resplendent amounts of money infused into the tourism industry the world over has, in turn, inspired a highly lucrative and commercial travel writing industry. Works of this sort are naturally averse to the Bruce Chatwin, Paul Theroux type of highly intellectual travel writing; they strive instead to afford a bird's-eye view to tourists. As a result, commercial travel books attempt to *sell* a country, not *understand* it.

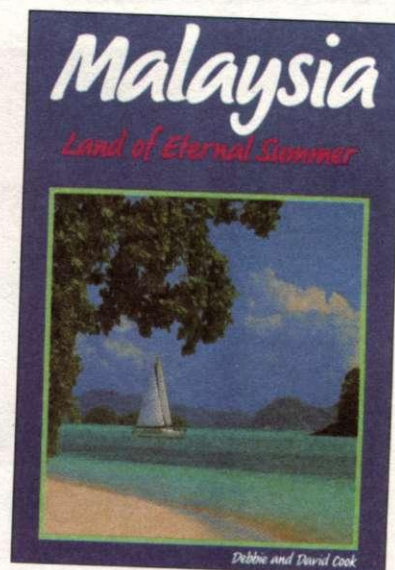
Debbie and David Cook ventured to Malaysia to write a guide/travel

book of the commercial kind, but *Malaysia: Land of Eternal Summer* transpired into a work that is more than just a guidebook. It aims to portray and bring to life the diversity of Malaysia, with its potpourri of peoples, through their cultures, religions and history.

The result of which is an appealing, delicately crafted work that aims to bridge serious, intelligent, literary pursuit with commercial appeal.

Malaysia: Land of Eternal Summer does not fail in its objectives.

It purports to afford a historical, cultural, societal view of Malaysia in all its heterogeneity — and this is exactly what it does, beckoning the reader through a state by state passage commencing with Melaka and ending with Sabah.



What makes this work distinguishable from the other, more cursory efforts of its kind, is that it delves into the historical and cultural formation of Malaysia with empathy and depth. In doing this, it enables the reader to fit the parts that make up the Malaysian mosaic — gaining a comprehension and appreciation of what it means to be a truly multi-racial, multi-cultural, multi-religious society ... what it means to be, in the words of the historian R. O. Winstedt, "...the world in miniature..."

While other commercial travel books persist in portraying Malaysia in all its 'exoticism', *Malaysia: Land of Eternal Summer* ventures, instead, to depict the country in all its positive and negative reality.

To add to the credibility of it all, the book includes some splendid photographs of the Malaysia of old and new. Captured by the authors themselves, the pictures add to the enchanting spectrum that is the Malaysian experience. The natural landscape features saliently but so do the cities, villages and peoples.

If a visitor is looking for an expedient, a 'where-to-find-what' type guide, then Lonely Planet's *Travel Survival Kit of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei* is the one to purchase. But if a deeper, more appreciative work that portrays Malaysia in all its life, is required, there are few that can rival Debbie and David Cook's *Malaysia: Land of Eternal Summer*. —
Review by Pak Dogol

MAPPING OUR FORESTS

THE tropical rainforests of Malaysia rank among the oldest in the world. It is a unique natural heritage which has evolved over millions of years, and is rich and varied in plant and animal life. There are over 8,000 species of flowering plants, of which 2,500 are tree species; well over 200 species of mammals; 600 species of birds; 140 species of snakes; 80 species of lizards and more than 26,000 species of insects.

In celebration of this magnificent resource, Falcon Press has published a poster map that provides an attractive overview of our forest resources. Besides showing the distribution of forests in the country, the map is chockfull of information on the biodiversity of the rainforest.

It is also copiously adorned with photographs of the different kinds of forests, from the dry, upper montane to the swampy, salty mangrove, and a sample of the plant or animal life that call it home.

A section on forest products underscores the importance of the forest in our everyday lives. There is also a section on sustainable management of the forest.

The text is written simply, without sacrificing readability. Even for those not schooled in the subject, the poster map is easily understood and appreciated. The use of colour photographs to exemplify the wealth of forest flora and fauna makes the poster map not only educational but attractive as well. At RM12, there are few things that can match that claim.



I have just returned from a visit to Malacca after a lapse of seven years. There are tremendous changes and developments taking place in Malacca. Under the capable leadership of your government, there have been many improvements, especially in the tourism industry.

It is incredible that Malacca has retained much of its historical and cultural richness. It is so unique that not many other equivalent regional surroundings can compare with it. It has a fantastic potential for tourism and numerous opportunities for investment and income.

There is still room for improvement in the tourism industry in Malacca. Efficiency and productivity depend upon constant review and improvement of the existing system. My suggestions towards this end are written out of a sincere consideration for the improvement of Malacca's tourism potential. If I am wrong, please pardon my inquisitiveness.

◆ The museum in Stadthuys possesses a rich collection of historical and anthropological records, mostly in the form of beautiful paintings. The Stadthuys itself is living proof of this richness. However, it could impress visitors further if it is fully air-conditioned, allayed with plastic, wax or earth figurine models of historical events, better if they are accompanied by automation and sound effects and lastly, it should be adorned with signs, lighting, fixtures and plants. The additional costs incurred can be borne by a higher entrance fee. Visitors would not mind paying a bit more because it would be worth it.

◆ The Kampung Kling Mosque is another building of great historical value. If it is repainted, beautifully adorned, and a small threatrette added to depict the richness of Islamic influence in Malacca in the past (displays can be in the form of CD-Rom, film strips or other

media), it would become a great educational centre.

◆ The Portuguese settlement could be capitalised with architectural monuments and variety programmes showing Portuguese culture, food, custom, tradition etc. It would be even better if there could be some means of depicting the development of the Portuguese in Malacca till the present. A small entrance fee could be levied.

◆ Spot the location of the Malacca sultanate and re-create film strips, slides, drawings and models depicting the great Malacca empire. In addition, the wisdom and strength of Sultan Mansor Shah, Tun Perak and the five brotherly warriors could also be illustrated in the form of automated figurine models.

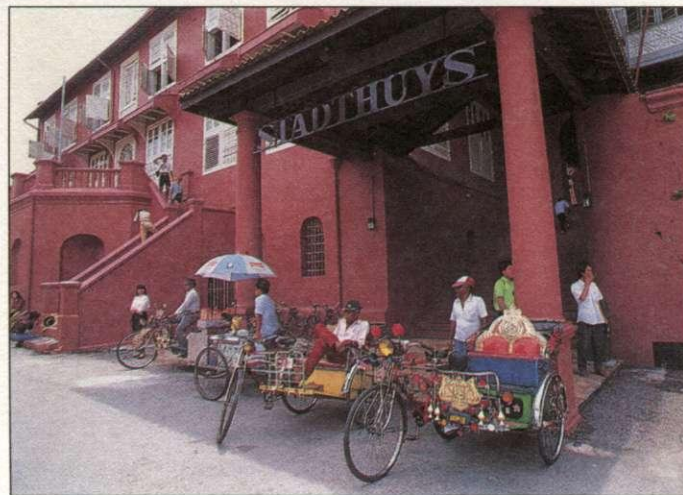
◆ Locate the site where Munshi Abdullah once stayed. Amplify the accounts of his talents, contributions to the Malay literature, his far-sightedness and the respect he earned from the English governor, Sir Stamford Raffles. Bring Munshi Abdullah to life in animated form. The younger generation will be enlightened by his teachings.

◆ Make full use of Bukit China's tourism

value. Build a model of the palace built by Sultan Mansor Shah for his queen Hang Li Po. Show how intermarriages were possible in the past, how history has shown the importance of harmony among the races, and how prosperity prevailed when Malacca could trade with and befriend various peoples from the surrounding regions.

If the tourism industry in Malacca is carefully developed, I foresee that it will become a major regional tourist attraction. ●

Tan Yew Eng
Singapore
23 May 1995



TOUCHED BY WARMTH OF MALAYSIANS

PLEASE accept a word of thanks from a humble reader from the other side of the world who shares your glorious Vision 2020. It is awe-inspiring to see so many colours, cultures and classes coming together to make it happen. A handshake or a smile can say more than a thousand public relations flyers.

In my home in Florida, where Disneyworld is situated, these friendly gestures are purchased in the open market.

This warm feeling I carry with me does not come from the sun, but from the hearts of Malaysians who have touched me along the way.

I can only say thanks by carrying the feeling home with me to sow the seed of that vision by creating a retreat of peace and goodwill at the Texas-Mexico border where people of many colours come together.

John Evans
Florida, USA

(Excerpts from a letter published in *The New Straits Times*, 26 May 1995)

Readers are welcome to send in their views, opinions and comments with regard to the Malaysian tourism industry. Please address letters to:
The Editor,
MALAYSIA TOURISM,
Malaysia Tourism
Promotion Board,
P.O. Box 10328,
50710 Kuala Lumpur,
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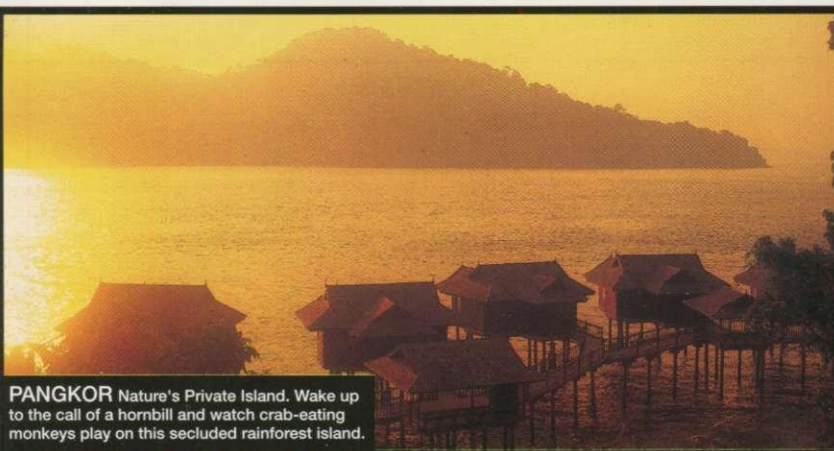
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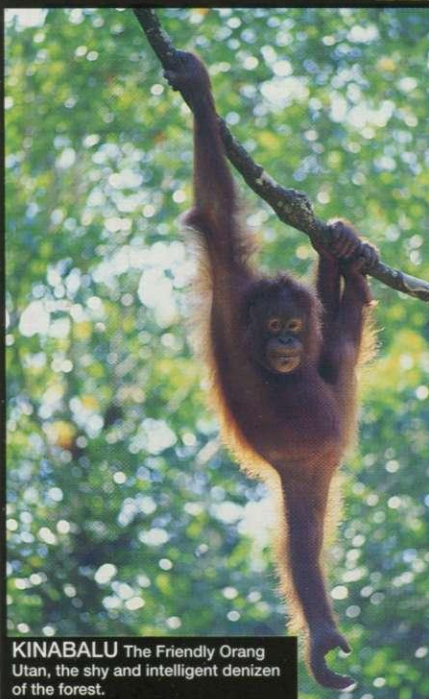
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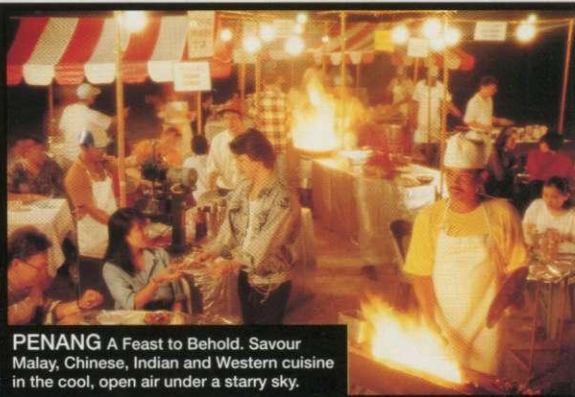


SARAWAK Land of the Hornbills. Come meet the friendly Dayaks, as they dance their greetings in their bright traditional costumes.

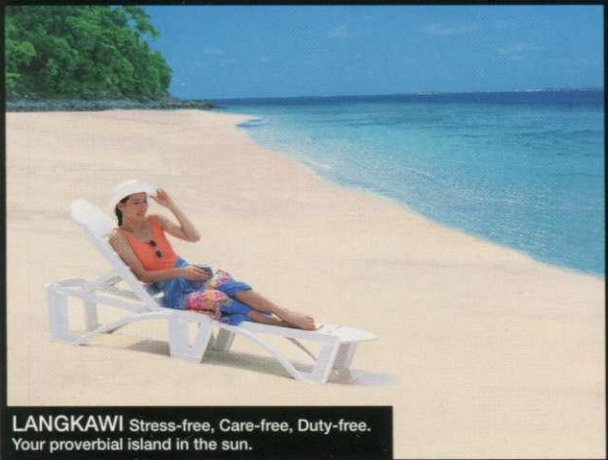
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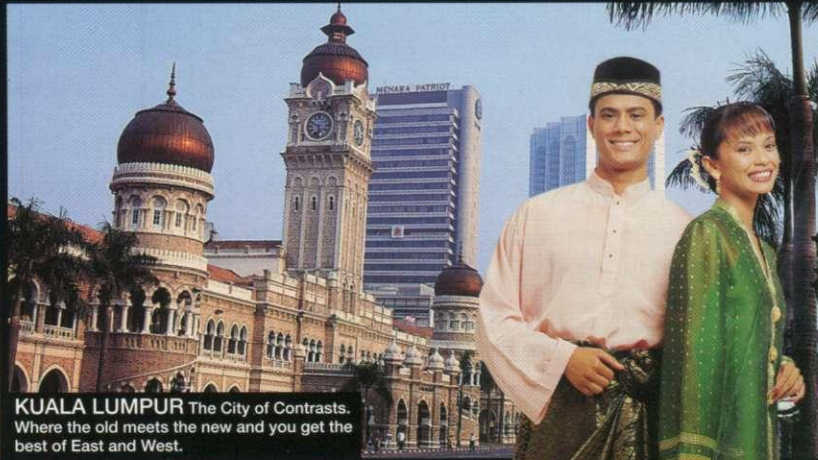
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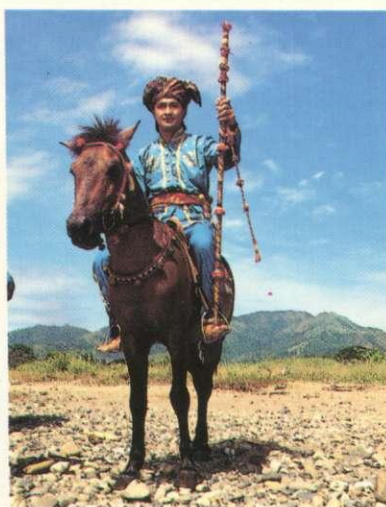
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